

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OGEN, SOPN, CGEN, UR
SUBJECT: INCIDENT INVOLVING AMERICAN CORRESPONDENT

REF: MOSCOW 3939

1. PRESS AND CULTURAL COUNSELOR, ACCOMPANIED BY PRESS ATTACHE, CALLED ON VITALIY KONSTANTINOVICH ZHURAVLEV, COUNSELOR AT MFA/PRESS MARCH 9 TO RAISE MATTER OF CONFISCATION OF PIPER'S MATERIALS (REFTEL). P&C COUNSELOR READ CONTENTS OF NON-PAPER TRANSMITTED REFTEL, STRESSING THAT CONFISCATED ITEMS ARE LEGITIMATE JOURNALISTIC MATERIALS AND SHOULD BE RETURNED TO PIPER FORTHWITH.
2. ZHURAVLEV NOTED THAT HE HAD RECEIVED LETTER FROM PIPER ON SUBJECT AND HAD "LOOKED INTO IT." HE SAID THAT SOME OF PIPER'S PAPERS WERE FROM RFE AND THAT THEY CONSTITUTED ANTI-SOVIET MATERIAL, THE IMPORTATION OF WHICH WAS IN VIOLATION OF SOVIET LAW. HE ADDED THAT OTHER MATERIAL WILL MOST LIKELY BE RETURNED TO PIPER AND THAT "NO DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PIPER IS INTENDED." ZHURAVLEV DELIVERED SOMEWHAT MORE FORTHCOMING FORMAL RESPONSE THAN
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WE ARE ACCUSTOMED TO: "I ACCEPT YOUR STATEMENT; I WILL LOOK INTO IT AND WILL INFORM YOU OF THE RESULTS."

3. IN FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION, P&C COUNSELOR SAID THAT RFE ITEMS PRESUMABLY DEALT WITH EASTERN EUROPE, NOT USSR, BUT THAT IN ANY CASE MATERIALS WHICH SOVIET LAW MIGHT FORMALLY CONSIDER ANTI-SOVIET WERE NEVERTHELESS LEGITIMATE

WHEN INTENDED ONLY FOR PRIVATE BACKGROUND USE OF JOURNALISTS. HE ENCOURAGED ZHURAVLEV TO INFORM CUSTOMS AND BORDER AUTHORITIES OF DISTINCTION BETWEEN INTENDED DISTRIBUTION AND PRIVATE PROFESSIONAL USE. ZHURAVLEV REPEATED THAT "EVERYTHING ACCEPTABLE UNDER SOVIET LAW" WILL BE RETURNED TO PIPER AND THAT "WE DON'T WANT TO MAKE A BIG THING OUT OF THIS - OF THAT YOU MAY BE ASSURED." HE DID HOWEVER STATE THAT THE LAW IS THE LAW AND THAT WHILE JOURNALISTS "CAN GET THEIR MATERIALS IN OTHER WAYS, THROUGH OFFICIAL CHANNELS", IF THEY CROSS BORDER THEY MUST BE TREATED AS WOULD BE ANY OTHER FOREIGNER. ZHURAVLEV PROFESSED TO "UNDERSTAND" THE AMERICAN POINT OF VIEW AND HE LAUNCHED INTO PANEGYRIC ON SOVIET ACTIONS TO "FACILITATE THE PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES OF JOURNALISTS" UNDER THE HELSINKI AGREEMENT.

4. WHEN SUGGESTION WAS REPEATED TO HIM THAT PERHAPS SOVIETS SHOULD BE MORE DISCRIMINATING IN APPLYING REGULATIONS PRESUMABLY INTENDED TO PREVENT TOURISTS FROM BRINGING IN QUANTITIES OF LITERATURE FOR DISTRIBUTION, ZHURAVLEV CLAIMED THAT EVERY COUNTRY HAS REGULATIONS WHICH SEEM STRANGE TO OUTSIDE OBSERVERS AND HE POINTEDLY COUNTERED WITH "YOUR INCOMPREHENSIBLE RULES" WHICH HAVE PREVENTED EXTRADITION OF BRAZINSKAS FATHER AND SON.

5. COMMENT: ZHURAVLEV IS CONSIDERABLY MORE SUAVE THAN SOME LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF HIS COLLEAGUES AT MFA/PRESS, AND HE DEALT WITH THIS SUBJECT IN LOW-KEY AND AFFABLE MANNER. HE WAS PREPARED FOR OUR PRESENTATION, AND HIS ASSURANCES THAT SOME, IF NOT ALL, OF PIPER'S MATERIALS WILL BE RETURNED PLUS HIS REPEATED ATTEMPTS TO DOWNPLAY SIGNIFICANCE OF BORDER INCIDENT CONSTITUTED, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, A REASONABLY CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSE TO OUR DEMARCHE. WE WILL, OF COURSE, CONTINUE TO MONITOR SITUATION UNTIL WE LEARN WHEN AND WHICH MATERIALS ARE RETURNED TO PIPER. TOON

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